2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

241 is very much liked as a food, but it does not grow well on all soils, and needs a good deal of labour to protect it from birds. Therefore it is less and less planted. Nevertheless, it is still the crop which has the greatest ritual importance, and there is something almost romantic in the natives' attitude to it. People stop at a field where it is grown and smile and say, 'How lucky the owner is to have such [643] good soil.' They describe *amasaka* districts with appreciation. It is associated with chieftainship, since Kaffir corn is necessary for much of the tribal ritual, and the greater supply of labour at the capital makes it easier to grow it. The perennial Kaffir corn (*sonkwe*) is easier to grow since it is not attacked by birds, but many Bemba do not rate its flour very highly. Both types are 241 doctored before sowing in some families (*icibyalilo*), and must 834 be protected from contact with sex. In the old days a man had 761 to purify himself after intercourse and wait three days before sowing the Kaffir corn. The crop is also considered to be injured by contact with death. 'People say: A hot person (i.e. a person who has not been ritually purified after a sex act) should not spoil the Kaffir corn; and a new death, it must not spoil it either.'[1] In the old days Kaffir-corn seeds were rubbed with a piece of dough, which had been made with water heated in the tiny marriage pot used to purify a chief mourner after the act of ritual intercourse with which he removed the taint of death from his family or village. This dough was thought to protect the seeds, as it contained elements of heat from contact with sex, and of cold from contact with death, and hence inoculated the crops against both dangers. 241 Many of these beliefs are dying now, but the tribal sacrifices of the Bemba still coincide with its first-fruit ceremony (cf. pp. 374–8); its flour is used to scatter over the dead body of a chief, and his corpse cannot be buried until the cycle of the Kaffir-corn harvest is at an end. The flour is used to fill the sacred basket in the chief's relic [881] hut. At one point in the girl's initiation ceremonies she lays her head on *amasaka* seeds. For all these reasons, the Bemba grow Kaffir corn whenever they can, and Citimukulu plants it definitely for ceremonial purposes. He went out himself with his sons to reap it during my visit and called me specially to watch the process. He kept saying it was 'good' (*cawama*) for a chief to grow Kaffir corn.

Two other old crops of the Bemba are handled ritually, but are

[1] *Baleti bukabe teti buonaule masaka: ne mfwa'mbishi tekuti ionaule masaka.*